

**2008 Upland Bird Population Trends
Magic Valley Region**

| | Trend from last year (2007) | 10-Year Trend (1999- 2008) | Comments |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Pheasant | Down | Down | August roadside survey data suggest a general decline in pheasant abundance in 2008. The region's 28 survey routes averaged 0.14 birds/mi; a decline from 0.24 birds/mi in 2007 and lower than the 10-year mean of 0.22 birds/mi. While overall pheasant numbers may be down, "good" numbers of birds were observed on several routes in Twin Falls, Jerome, and Elmore counties. Survey data also continue to reflect pheasant densities that are 2-3 times higher on the west side of the region than the east side (Cassia, Minidoka, east Lincoln counties). Dry conditions during May and June 2008 allowed the first alfalfa harvest to proceed on schedule, disrupting initial pheasant nesting attempts. Pheasant stocking will continue at Niagara Springs WMA. |
| Greater Sage-Grouse | Down | Stable | Sage-grouse lek route data suggest declines in grouse numbers in 2007 and 2008 after a decade of increasing numbers (1997-2006). On 20 routes with data for 2006-2008, the total number of males counted in 2008 decreased by 29% from 2007 and 45% from 2006. On 11 routes with data for 1992-2008, the number of males counted was similar to 1996 and 1997 levels. The most substantial declines have occurred in the northern portion of the region (Gooding, Lincoln, Camas, & Blaine counties) where lek counts are down an average of 71% from 2006 levels. Sage-grouse production in 2007, based on hunter-harvested wing collections, was the lowest ever recorded in the region (61 juveniles/100 females). Hunting seasons for 2008: Owyhee County <u>east</u> of the Bruneau River will remain closed to hunting as it was in 2007. Curlew Valley area in Oneida, Power and eastern Cassia counties will be opened to hunting in 2008 (after being closed for several years) with a 7- day season and 1-bird bag limit. The remainder of the Magic Valley Region will have a conservative 7-day season and 1-bird daily bag limit. |
| Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse | Stable | Stable | Lek surveys suggest that sharp-tailed grouse numbers have changed little during the past 5-6 years. While numbers generally remain lower than the high levels reached during 1999 & 2000, sharpie populations are strong and provide liberal hunting opportunities (Oct. 1-31; 2-bird daily bag). The best hunting is typically in CRP fields that have green alfalfa or other forbs. If dry conditions persist, hunters should expect early movements of sharpies up into mountain shrub communities (serviceberry) and to areas where green forbs can still be found. Land enrolled in the Access Yes! program in Cassia, Power, and Oneida counties provide ample access to hunting areas. |
| Chukar | Stable | Stable | Chukar numbers declined in 2007 after 4 consecutive years of good chukar hunting from 2003-2006. No chukar surveys are conducted in the Magic Valley Region but surveys at Brownlee and Luck Peak Rsvr. indicate low chukar densities relative to the long-term average. |
| Gray Partridge | Down | Down | Hun numbers in the intensively farmed areas of the Magic Valley are indexed by August Roadside surveys. On August 2008 surveys, only 31 huns were observed (0.06 birds/mi) compared to 92 huns in 2007 (0.16 birds/mi.) and 163 huns in 2006 (0.29 birds/mile). In 2007, Magic Valley hunters harvested only 5,900 huns compared to the nearly 20,000 huns that were taken in 2006. |
| California Quail | Stable | Up | Quail numbers in the region remain above average. The number of quail observed on August 2008 surveys (0.25 quail/mi) was similar to 2007 (0.31 quail/mi) and 2006 (0.28 quail/mi) and slightly higher than the 10-year average (0.20 birds/mi). Quail harvest in 2006 (38,500 birds) was the highest recorded in the past 20 years. The harvest in 2007 was lower (16,000 birds) but reports were that hunting was very good. In the Magic Valley, quail numbers are highest along the Snake River and its tributaries west of Twin Falls. |
| Mourning Dove | Down | Up | Late August dove numbers in the Magic Valley trended upward from 2000-2007. In 2008, Department personnel observed 3.4 doves/mi which was lower than the 5.0 doves/mi observed in 2007. Cooler weather in late August 2008 resulted in earlier migrations of doves out of the area. |
| Ruffed Grouse | Stable | Stable | Early reports from hunters and field personnel suggest low numbers of blue and ruffed grouse throughout the region. |
| Blue Grouse | Stable | Stable | |